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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SHANGHAI 007130

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TAGS: PGOV PREL US CH

SUBJECT: RECENT SETBACKS ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY OUTREACH

REF: GUANGZHOU 32340

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CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Jarrett, Consul General, AMCONSUL ,
SHANGHAI.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. For the past several months, Shanghai's Public Affairs Section (PAS) has pursued local partner institutions as potential hosts for a variety of IIP-produced poster shows on key mission themes. Like our colleagues in Guangzhou (reftel), we too have run into resistance from our local Foreign Affairs Office (FAO), which has pulled the plug both on poster shows and proposed talks on intellectual property rights. The Director of Fudan University's Center for American Studies, who was initially enthusiastic about hosting a series of poster shows, recently told us that the Shanghai FAO was acting in accordance with an MFA order cautioning Shanghai-area universities to "limit their interaction" with the Shanghai Consulate. Although some of our activities have been affected, we continue to attract large numbers to our film screenings and our speaker program is as active as ever. End summary.

Initial Success ...

¶2. (SBU) As part of its ongoing PD outreach campaign throughout East China, Shanghai PAS began earlier this year engaging local institutions as host partners for various IIP-produced poster shows on key mission themes, ranging from American culture to environmental protection to IPR. PAS chose initially to target its outreach efforts outside Shanghai. Ningbo University Zone Library, which serves six local universities in the city of Ningbo in Zhejiang Province, proved a willing partner, hosting two IIP-produced poster shows on Jazz Music and African-American Writers in January 2006. Enthusiastic crowds of more than 70,000 students and members of the general public viewed the exhibit over a six-week period.

¶3. (SBU) The Xuhui Library, one of Shanghai's district-level libraries, also proved a willing partner, showing the same two American cultural exhibits for a month in March-April 2006 to more than 20,000 visitors. At the opening ceremony, the Deputy Director of the Xuhui District Cultural Affairs Bureau told PAO that the Xuhui District Government welcomed continued interaction with the U.S. Consulate and opportunities for its citizens to learn more about the United States.

... Followed by Frustration

¶4. (C) Post subsequently planned a series of outreach activities in the spring centered on the theme of IPR protection, to include an IIP-produced poster show, translated

into Chinese, and a speech by the CG on the benefits of IPR protection to China's development of a knowledge-based economy. We targeted the nine IPR institutes and research centers at various Shanghai universities as potential hosts for these activities. Three universities were initially enthusiastic, but dropped out one by one under instructions from the Shanghai FAO.

Post also approached the Shanghai IPR Bureau about the possibility of mounting the IPR poster show on the occasion of World IPR Day on April 26, but again the FAO intervened, effectively shutting down most of our outreach plans on the topic of IPR. (The CG was able to give his speech to a local chamber of commerce.)

FAO Nixes Poster Show at Fudan

15. (C) When long-time Consulate contact Shen Dingli was named Director of the Center for American Studies (CAS) at Fudan University in May 2006, he reached out to us for assistance in providing basic information about American society, culture and policies to his students to the Center on a regular basis. Together with Shen, PAS designed a series of poster shows to be displayed in the center lobby over the course of the current academic year, on topics ranging from HIV/AIDS to environmental protection to Black History. The series was to begin with a month-long show on HIV/AIDS on November 9 as a prelude to World AIDS Day. The day before the scheduled opening, Shen informed us that the Shanghai FAO had told Fudan that not only did it not have permission for the planned show on HIV/AIDS, but that the Shanghai FAO would have to review the content of each planned poster show before it would grant approval. As of December 6, no such approval had been received, forcing the postponement of any poster shows until March 2007, after the Chinese New Year break.

16. (C) When the CG raised this matter with FAO Director Jeffrey Yang on November 10, Yang said that Fudan had failed to go through appropriate channels to seek permission for the show.

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Yang also betrayed sensitivity about the HIV/AIDS theme, arguing that the reported numbers of HIV/AIDS cases in China was exaggerated. Yang also noted that his office would need to review the content of any poster show. Yang said his office didn't want to do this piecemeal, preferring instead to review the proposed poster shows as a series.

17. (C) In a related incident, Shen told the PAO that Fudan University's FAO had criticized one of his deputy directors, Sun Zhe, for not informing them of his bringing Fudan students to participate in an October 17 DVC at the Consulate on the midterm elections. Sun Zhe, also a long-time Consulate contact, was one of the panelists for this dialogue and the 40 students from Fudan were among the most knowledgeable and enthusiastic audience participants. Shen reported that Sun had been subsequently told he needed FAO permission to involve students in activities with the Consulate and that he shouldn't invite as many students in the future. At a second Consulate DVC after the midterm elections on November 27, Sun Zhe was again a panelist, but this time he only brought 20 students.

Shanghai FAO Acting on Instruction from Beijing MFA?

18. (C) Post's initial reaction was that this was a classic bureaucratic struggle between Fudan University and the Shanghai FAO, with Shen's relative inexperience as Director of CAS a contributing factor. A subsequent conversations with Shen, however, revealed that there was more to the situation than simple procedural violations. Shen sought out the PAO at a function on November 12 to say that he had learned that the MFA had issued an instruction earlier in the fall directing all Shanghai area universities to "limit their interaction" with the U.S. Consulate. Shen also said that Fudan had apparently never

received a copy of this notice. As far as Shen was aware, it was business as usual with the Consulate. It remains to be seen whether Fudan has sufficient political capital to mount Consulate-sponsored poster shows.

Comment

19. (C) Shen is the only local contact to reference a supposed MFA directive on interaction with the Consulate, so we cannot state for a fact that such a document exists. Regardless, the Shanghai FAO has disrupted our plans to host poster shows at Fudan and did obstruct earlier plans for talks on IPR protection. Other PAS programs -- such as our popular film screenings and speaker programs -- however, continue unaffected.

For example, on December 14, DPO spoke at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics on U.S.-China trade relations. That makes it even more difficult to decipher the intent behind the supposed directive. Post will continue to pursue local partners as hosts for poster shows and to explore alternative programming possibilities with Fudan's CAS. Unlike our Guangzhou colleagues, however, we fear the Shanghai FAO's mood, at least with respect to poster shows, may not pass quickly.

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